

Job Outlook

People seeking beginning jobs as radio and television broadcast technicians are expected to face strong competition in major metropolitan areas, where the number of qualified job seekers exceeds the number of openings. There, stations seek highly experienced personnel. Prospects for entry-level positions generally are better in small cities and towns for beginners with appropriate training.

The overall employment of broadcast and sound technicians is expected to grow slowly through the year 2008. An increase in the number of programming hours should require additional technicians. However, employment growth in radio and television broadcasting may be tempered somewhat because of slow growth in the number of new radio and television stations and labor-saving technical advances, such as computer-controlled programming and remote control of transmitters. Technicians who know how to install transmitters will be in demand as television stations replace existing analog transmitters with digital transmitters. Stations will begin broadcasting in both analog and digital formats, eventually switching entirely to digital.

Employment in the cable industry should grow because of new products coming to market, such as cable modems, which deliver high speed Internet access to personal computers, and digital set-top boxes, which transmit better sound and pictures, allowing cable operators to offer many more channels than in the past. These new products should cause traditional cable subscribers to sign up for additional services.

Employment in the motion picture industry will grow as fast as the average for all occupations. Job prospects are expected to remain competitive, because of the large number of people attracted to this relatively small field.

Virtually all job openings will result from the need to replace experienced technicians who leave the occupation. Turnover is relatively high for broadcast and sound technicians. Many leave the occupation for electronic jobs in other areas, such as computer technology or commercial and industrial repair.

Earnings

Television stations usually pay higher salaries than radio stations; commercial broadcasting usually pays more than public broadcasting; and stations in large markets pay more than those in small ones.

Median annual earnings of broadcast and sound technicians in 1998 were \$25,270. The middle 50 percent earned between \$16,940 and \$40,310. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$12,620 and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$67,020. Median annual earnings of broadcast and sound technicians in 1997 were \$21,700 in the radio and television broadcasting industry.

Related Occupations

Broadcast and sound technicians need the electronics training and hand coordination necessary to operate technical equipment, and they generally complete specialized postsecondary programs. Similar occupations include engineering technicians, science technicians, health technologists and technicians, and electronic equipment repairers.

Sources of Additional Information

For information on careers for broadcast and sound technicians, write to:

✉ National Association of Broadcasters Employment Clearinghouse, 1771 N St. NW., Washington, DC 20036. Internet: <http://www.nab.org>

For information on certification, contact:

✉ Society of Broadcast Engineers, 8445 Keystone Crossing, Suite 140, Indianapolis, IN 46240. Internet: <http://www.sbe.org>

For information on careers in the motion picture and television industry, contact:

✉ Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers (SMPTE), 595 West Hartsdale Ave., White Plains, NY 10607.

News Analysts, Reporters, and Correspondents

(O*NET 34002A, 34011, and 34014)

Significant Points

- Employment is expected to grow little and there should be keen competition for job openings.
- Less competition is expected for jobs with suburban and weekly newspapers and small radio and television stations.
- Jobs are often stressful because of irregular hours, frequent night and weekend work, and pressure to meet deadlines.

Nature of the Work

News analysts, reporters, and correspondents play a key role in our society. They gather information, prepare stories, and make broadcasts that inform us about local, State, national, and international events; present points of view on current issues; and report on the actions of public officials, corporate executives, special interest groups, and others who exercise power.

News analysts examine, interpret, and broadcast news received from various sources, and are also called *newscasters* or *news anchors*. News anchors present news stories and introduce videotaped news or live transmissions from on-the-scene reporters. Some newscasters at large stations and networks usually specialize in a particular type of news, such as sports or weather. *Weathercasters*, also called weather reporters, report current and forecasted weather conditions. They gather information from national satellite weather services, wire services, and local and regional weather bureaus. Some weathercasters are trained *meteorologists* and can develop their own weather forecasts. (See the statement on meteorologists elsewhere in the *Handbook*.) *Sportscasters* select, write, and deliver sports news. This may include interviews with sports personalities and coverage of games and other sporting events.

In covering a story, *reporters* investigate leads and news tips, look at documents, observe events at the scene, and interview people. Reporters take notes and may also take photographs or shoot videos. At their office, they organize the material, determine the focus or emphasis, write their stories, and can edit accompanying video material. Many reporters enter information or write stories on laptop computers, and electronically submit them to their offices from remote locations. In some cases, *newswriters* write a story from information collected and submitted by reporters. Radio and television reporters often compose stories and report "live" from the scene. At times, they later tape an introduction or commentary to their story in the studio. Some journalists also interpret the news or offer opinions to readers, viewers, or listeners. In this role, they are called *commentators* or *columnists*.

General assignment reporters write news, such as an accident, a political rally, the visit of a celebrity, or a company going out of business, as assigned. Large newspapers and radio and television stations assign reporters to gather news about specific categories or beats, such as crime or education. Some reporters specialize in fields such as health, politics, foreign affairs, sports, theater, consumer affairs, social events, science, business, and religion. Investigative reporters cover stories that take many days or weeks of information gathering. Some publications use teams of reporters instead of assigning specific beats, allowing reporters to cover a greater variety of stories. News teams may include reporters, editors, graphic artists, and photographers, working together to complete a story.



News analysts analyze, interpret, and broadcast news received from various sources.

News *correspondents* report on news occurring in the large U.S. and foreign cities where they are stationed. Reporters on small publications cover all aspects of the news: They take photographs, write headlines, lay out pages, edit wire service copy, and write editorials. Some also solicit advertisements, sell subscriptions, and perform general office work.

Working Conditions

The work of news analysts, reporters, and correspondents is usually hectic. They are under great pressure to meet deadlines and broadcasts are sometimes made with little time for preparation. Some work in comfortable, private offices; others work in large rooms filled with the sound of keyboards and computer printers, as well as the voices of other reporters. Curious onlookers, police, or other emergency workers can distract those reporting from the scene for radio and television. Covering wars, political uprisings, fires, floods, and similar events is often dangerous.

Working hours vary. Reporters on morning papers often work from late afternoon until midnight. Those on afternoon or evening papers generally work from early morning until early afternoon or mid afternoon. Radio and television reporters are usually assigned to a day or evening shift. Magazine reporters usually work during the day.

Reporters sometimes have to change their work hours to meet a deadline, or to follow late-breaking developments. Their work demands long hours, irregular schedules, and some travel. Many stations and networks are on the air 24 hours a day, so newscasters can expect to work unusual hours.

Employment

News analysts, reporters, and correspondents held about 67,000 jobs in 1998. About 6 of every 10 worked for newspapers—either large city dailies or suburban and small town dailies or weeklies. About 3 in 10 worked in radio and television broadcasting, and others worked for magazines and wire services.

Training, Other Qualifications, and Advancement

Most employers prefer individuals with a bachelor's degree in journalism, but some hire graduates with other majors. They look for experience on school newspapers or broadcasting stations and internships with news organizations. Large city newspapers and stations can also prefer candidates with a degree in a subject-matter specialty such as economics, political science, or business. Large newspapers and broadcasters also require a minimum of 3 to 5 years of experience as a reporter.

Bachelor's degree programs in journalism are available in over 400 colleges or universities. About three-fourths of the courses in a typical curriculum are in liberal arts; the remainder are in journalism. Journalism courses include introductory mass media, basic reporting and copy editing, history of journalism, and press law and ethics. Students planning a career in broadcasting take courses in radio and television newscasting and production. Those planning newspaper or magazine careers usually specialize in news-editorial journalism. Those planning careers in new media, such as online newspapers or magazines, require a merging of traditional and new journalism skills. To create a story for online presentation, they need to know how to use computer software to combine online story text with audio and video elements and graphics.

Many community and junior colleges offer journalism courses or programs; credits may be transferable to 4-year journalism programs.

Over 157 schools offered a master's degree in journalism in 1998; about 32 schools offered a Ph.D. degree. Some graduate programs are intended primarily as preparation for news careers, while others prepare journalism teachers, researchers and theorists, and advertising and public relations workers.

High school courses in English, journalism, and social studies provide a good foundation for college programs. Useful college liberal arts courses include English with an emphasis on writing, sociology, political science, economics, history, and psychology. Courses in computer science, business, and speech are useful, as well. Fluency in a foreign language is necessary in some jobs.

Although reporters need good word-processing skills, computer graphics and desktop publishing skills are also useful. Computer-assisted reporting involves the use of computers to analyze data in search of a story. This technique and the interpretation of the results require strong math skills and familiarity with databases. Knowledge of news photography also is valuable for entry-level positions, which sometimes combine reporter/camera operator or reporter/photographer responsibilities.

Experience in a part-time or summer job or an internship with a news organization is very important. (Most newspapers, magazines, and broadcast news organizations offer reporting and editing internships.) Work on high school and college newspapers, at broadcasting stations, or on community papers or Armed Forces publications also helps. In addition, journalism scholarships, fellowships, and assistantships awarded to college journalism students by universities, newspapers, foundations, and professional organizations are helpful. Experience as a stringer or freelancer, a part-time reporter, who is paid only for stories printed, is also advantageous.

Reporters should be dedicated to providing accurate and impartial news. Accuracy is important, both to serve the public and because untrue or libelous statements can lead to costly lawsuits. A nose for news, persistence, initiative, poise, resourcefulness, a good memory, and physical stamina are important, as well as the emotional stability to deal with pressing deadlines, irregular hours, and dangerous assignments. Broadcast reporters and news analysts must be comfortable on camera. All reporters must be at ease in unfamiliar places and with a variety of people. Positions involving on-air work require a pleasant voice and appearance.

Most reporters start at small publications or broadcast stations as general assignment reporters or copy editors. Large publications and stations hire few recent graduates; as a rule, they require new reporters to have several years of experience.

Beginning reporters cover court proceedings and civic and club meetings, summarize speeches, and write obituaries. With experience, they report more difficult assignments, cover an assigned beat, or specialize in a particular field.

Some news analysts and reporters can advance by moving to large newspapers or stations. A few experienced reporters become columnists, correspondents, writers, announcers, or public relations specialists. Others become editors in print journalism or program managers in broadcast journalism, who supervise reporters. Some eventually become broadcasting or publications industry managers.

Job Outlook

Overall employment of news analysts, reporters, and correspondents is expected to grow little through the year 2008—the result of mergers, consolidations, and closures of newspapers; decreased circulation; increased expenses; and a decline in advertising profits. In spite of little change in overall employment, some job growth is expected in radio and television stations, whereas more rapid growth is expected in new media areas, such as online newspapers and magazines.

Competition will continue to be keen for jobs on large metropolitan newspapers and broadcast stations and on national magazines. Talented writers who can handle highly specialized scientific or technical subjects have an advantage. Also, more newspapers than before are hiring stringers and freelancers.

Most entry-level openings arise on small publications, as reporters and correspondents become editors or reporters on larger publications or leave the field. Small town and suburban newspapers will continue to offer most opportunities for persons seeking to enter this field.

Turnover is relatively high in this occupation. Some find the work too stressful and hectic, or do not like the lifestyle and transfer to other occupations. Journalism graduates have the background for work in closely-related fields such as advertising and public relations, and many take jobs in these fields. Other graduates accept sales, managerial, or other non-media positions, because of the difficulty in finding media jobs.

The newspaper and broadcasting industries are sensitive to economic ups and downs, because these industries depend on advertising revenue. During recessions, few new reporters are hired; and some reporters lose their jobs.

Earnings

Salaries for news analysts, reporters, and correspondents vary widely but, in general, are relatively high, except at small stations and small publications, where salaries are often very low. Median annual earnings of news analysts were \$26,470 in 1998. The middle 50 percent earned between \$19,210 and \$40,930. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$14,100 and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$70,140. Median annual earnings of news analysts in radio and television broadcasting were \$28,500 in 1997.

Median annual earnings of reporters and correspondents were \$23,400 in 1997. The middle 50 percent earned between \$17,500 and \$35,600. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$12,900 and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$55,100. Median annual earnings of reporters and correspondents in 1997 were \$23,300 in radio and television broadcasting and \$22,600 in newspapers.

According to a survey conducted by the National Association of Broadcasters and the Broadcast Cable Financial Management Association in 1997 and 1998, the annual average salary, including bonuses, for television news reporters was \$33,200 and \$32,300 for radio news reporters. Sportscasters averaged \$52,600 in television broadcasting and \$57,600 in radio broadcasting. Weathercasters earned an average of \$55,000.

Related Occupations

News analysts, reporters, and correspondents must write clearly and effectively to succeed in their profession. Others for whom good writing ability is essential include technical writers, advertising copy writers, public relations workers, educational writers, fiction writers, biographers, screen writers, and editors. Many news analysts, reporters, and correspondents must also communicate information orally. Others for whom oral communication skills are vital are announcers, interpreters, sales workers, and teachers.

Sources of Additional Information

For information on careers in broadcast news and related scholarships and internships, contact:

☛ Radio and Television News Directors Foundation, 1000 Connecticut Ave. NW., Washington, DC 20036. Internet: <http://www.rtndf.org>

General information on the broadcasting industry is available from:

☛ National Association of Broadcasters, 1771 N St. NW., Washington, DC 20036. Internet: <http://www.nab.org>

Career information, including pamphlets entitled *Newspaper Career Guide*, and *Newspaper: What's In It For Me?* is available from:

☛ Newspaper Association of America, 1921 Gallows Rd., Suite 600, Vienna, VA 22182.

Information on careers in journalism, colleges and universities offering degree programs in journalism or communications, and journalism scholarships and internships may be obtained from:

☛ The Dow Jones Newspaper Fund, Inc., PO Box 300, Princeton, NJ 08543-0300. Internet: <http://www.dowjones.com>

Information on union wage rates for newspaper and magazine reporters is available from:

☛ The Newspaper Guild, Research and Information Department, 501 3rd St. NW., Suite 250, Washington, DC 20001.

Internet: <http://www.newsguild.org>

For a list of schools with accredited programs in journalism, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to:

☛ The Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications, University of Kansas School of Journalism, Stauffer-Flint Hall, Lawrence, KS 66045. Internet: <http://www.ukans.edu/~acejmc>

A pamphlet entitled *Newspaper Careers and Challenges for the Next Century*, can be obtained from:

☛ National Newspaper Association, 1525 Wilson Blvd., Suite 550, Arlington, VA 22209. Internet: <http://www.oweb.com/naa/home2.html>

Names and locations of newspapers and a list of schools and departments of journalism are published in the *Editor and Publisher International Year Book*, available in most public libraries and newspaper offices.

Public Relations Specialists

(O*NET 34008)

Significant Points

- Employment of public relations specialists is expected to increase faster than average, while keen competition is expected for entry-level jobs.
- Opportunities should be best for college graduates who combine a degree in journalism, public relations, advertising, or other communications-related fields with public relations work experience.

Nature of the Work

An organization's reputation, profitability, and even its continued existence can depend on the degree to which its targeted "publics" support its goals and policies. Public relations specialists serve as advocates for businesses, governments, universities, hospitals, schools, and other organizations, and build and maintain positive relationships with the public. As managers recognize the growing importance of good public relations to the success of their organizations, they increasingly rely on public relations specialists for advice on strategy and policy of such programs.

Public relations specialists handle organizational functions such as media, community, consumer, and governmental relations; political campaigns; interest-group representation; conflict mediation; or employee and investor relations. However, public relations is not only "telling the organization's story." Understanding the attitudes and concerns of consumers, employees, and various other groups is also a vital part of the job. To improve communications, public relations specialists establish and maintain cooperative relationships with representatives of community, consumer, employee, and public interest groups and those in print and broadcast journalism.